

MASSACHUSETTS ALL-PAYER CLAIMS DATABASE (APCD)

Accessing APCD Data – Frequently Asked Questions [November 2012]

1. When will the data be available?

Currently, data are available for 2008, 2009, and 2010.

2. Does the APDC contain Medicaid/MassHealth or Medicare data?

Medicaid and Medicare data are not available as part of the current release. We expect to make this data available as part of the 2013 APCD release. At this point, Medicare data in the APCD will only be released to Massachusetts state agencies.

3. How do I apply to receive APCD data?

The application for APCD data is on our website.

4. How long does the application process take?

The process takes about 2-3 months. Applications are reviewed by [Data Release Committee](#), a multi-stakeholder group representing researchers, providers, consumers and state agencies. The Committee meets monthly. After the application has been reviewed by the Committee and approved by the Executive Director of the Center for Health Information and Analysis, it may take up to a month for the data to be delivered to the applicant, depending on the quantity and complexity of the data requested.

5. Is IRB approval required to obtain APCD data?

Evidence of IRB approval is required, unless your organization's IRB declines to review your study on the basis that IRB approval is not needed (we will require documentation of this as well).

6. Am I required to attend the meeting in which the Data Release Committee reviews my application?

Applicants are not required to attend, but we strongly encourage applicants to either attend the Data Release Committee meeting in person or call in on the conference line. The process of approving an application is much easier when applicants are able to address the Data Release Committee's questions or concerns at the time of the meeting. Otherwise, it becomes far more likely that the Committee will defer the application until their concerns have been addressed, thus delaying the approval process by at least a month.

7. Can I receive custom cuts of data?

The option to receive custom cuts of data is not available for the current release. We expect to make this option available in future releases at an additional fee.

8. Is there an up-to-date data element list available?

The list of data elements is located on the website in the same location as the data request application.

9. What is meant by the term “masked” in the data element list? Will masked elements be consistent across file types for linking purposes?

This means that the contents of the data element have been encrypted. However, the same encryption is used throughout the six (6) APCD files so that records can be linked.

10. How much does APCD data cost and can I apply for a fee waiver if I am not able to pay for APCD data?

The fee schedule for APCD data is available here [[APCD Fee Schedule](#)]. Waivers will be available for applicants who demonstrate their research will benefit the public, but lack funding.

11. Will I need all of the APCD files for my study?

No. The number of files depends on the study. Here are a few simplified scenarios to help you determine what you may need:

<i>If you were researching:</i>	<i>You would likely want to access the following files:</i>
Utilization- number of days, surgeries, treatments. etc.	Medical or Dental
Utilization rates – days/1000, visits/1000, etc.	Medical or Dental and member eligibility
Use of drugs – number of prescriptions, types	Pharmacy
Use of drugs for a given condition	Medical (for dx) and Pharmacy
Total cost of care	Medical and Pharmacy
Impact of deductibles and coinsurance on treatments.	Medical, Pharmacy, Membership and Product
Cost of care by physician specialty	Medical, Pharmacy, Membership, Provider

12. Why are some data elements repeated in multiple files?

To allow linkages across files for analysis.

13. Does the Division provide any technical support for users after they've received the data?

The Division will be available for technical support. The Division will charge an hourly rate for these services.

14. If I have questions about the APCD or the data request process, who should I contact?

General APCD questions should be sent to dhcfp.apcd@state.ma.us. Questions related to APCD data requests should be sent to apcd.data@state.ma.us.